

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye over you . . . Psalm 32:8



HOME GROWN!

In our last newsletter, I shared how we were getting ready for our United Brethren National Conference. Well, now, we have had the conference, celebrating 250 years since the founding of the United Brethren in Christ movement, going all the way back to 1767; that's even before the 'United States' became a nation!

And, I want to remind us - that our church is 'HOME GROWN.' Made in the USA, you might say. Most church movements then present in the colonies at that time were transplants, brought in from other countries, and other cultures; England (The Church of England, Congregationalist, Puritans), Germany (The Lutheran Church, Reformed), Italy (Catholics).

Our movement was established during the 'Great Awakening' of the mid to late 1700s, when evangelicalism (a fervor for making disciples) swept the northeast, including Pennsylvania. Two different men, Martin Boehm - a Mennonite farmer and lay (unschooled) preacher, and Philip William Otterbein - an ordained German Reformed pastor, found themselves in the same barn, Isaac Long's barn, just north of the city of Lancaster one day in 1767. Following Martin Boehm's preaching a simple sermon illustrating his conversion to Christ - a radical life change - Philip Otterbein came up to the front, embraced him, and proclaimed 'we are brothers' (In German, of course!) These two worked together for nearly fifty years as co-leaders of a new, born in American Christian tradition that was and still is called 'The United Brethren in Christ.' In 1815, our church published a confession of faith, the elementary teachings that we believe and agree upon, and this has remained unchanged to this day.

So, Lancaster, 2017. What a wonderful conference we had! Some highlights from the conference held July 12 - 15:

✚ GUM is our new byword, as UB people. Our new acronym, our rallying cry. Here's what it stands for:

- **Gospel:** We are to be spiritually alive in Christ!
- **Unity:** We are to be relationally connected in Christ!
- **Mission:** We are to be missionally engaged for Christ!

✚ The body of delegates voted to endorse the nomination of a new Bishop, Todd Feters. He has been working as interim bishop these last two years, and was a local fixture as senior pastor of the Devonshire UB Church in Harrisburg for many years.



✚ At the Thursday morning business meeting, under much societal pressure for the church to change its position on sexual ethics for our modern society, the body of delegates approved additional and clarified paragraphs in our 'Discipline' creating clear statements about where we stand on marriage, illicit sexual relations,

singleness, and sex and gender distinctions. All confirm and are based on historical scriptural teachings, and balanced with grace and concern for people who are struggling with sexual temptations in our liberalized society.

✚ Evening sessions Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday featured home grown musicians from King Street and other UB churches leading us in moving worship times, and home grown UB preachers offered sermons each night; the Gospel on Wednesday, Unity on Thursday, and Mission on Friday.

✚ Friday morning featured a lineup of a dozen or more training opportunities, during three time slots. Training ranged from classes about UB history, including historical details about our founders, to how to evangelize using only a Bible, to unknown stories from our missionaries (that cannot be published in print because they place our missionary families at risk in the nations where they are serving).

✚ Free times were available during the afternoons of conference for participants to take historical tours to places frequented by our founders 250 years ago, such as Long's Barn, which is still being used agriculturally today. Others visited shopping or historical destinations in and around Lancaster. Part of our Salem entourage took a tour of the buffet at the 'Shady Maple Restaurant', which features a buffet line 200 feet long, with seating for 1200 people! The buffet lines included such Amish favorites as noodles, pot roast, fried chicken, green beans, carrots, and pizza (!?)

✚ Saturday morning was a conference highlight for those who endured to the end, for nine men were ordained as elders, to go and preach the word faithfully in the United States. Among them was our own Pastor Genre Lascase, who has been faithfully leading the Salem Haitian Congregation for more than seven years.

Overall, our home grown conference was well done, very high in quality and in spiritual tone. We have much to celebrate as a movement for Christ that continues to honor Him, to carry forward the mission - making disciples - and who stand on God's Word as the source of truth.



INTRODUCING A NEW UB FAMILY

Interestingly, immediately following the 'National Conference' in Lancaster, there was a three day 'International Conference' at King Street Church, in Chambersburg. Our Missions Director had asked for local Chambersburg families to step up and offer hospitality and housing to those foreign nationals who would be attending the International Conference, and two of our Salem families volunteered. Debbie and I hosted Bishop Moses Somah from the West African Nation of Liberia, and Pastor Bob and Lois Conway hosted two guests from the island nation of Jamaica, a present and former bishop.

The Liberian story is an interesting one. In the 1820s, in our nation, those who opposed the institution of slavery felt that freed slaves had a better chance of true freedom and a prosperous life if they returned to their homeland. The first group to return sailed from New York City on February 6, 1820, carrying 86 passengers. The ship was called the 'Mayflower of Liberia.' The colony grew, and established its independence as a nation in 1847, and has remained free and independent since that time, even during the 'Scramble for Africa' by European colonial powers in the late 1800s.

Liberia is predominantly a conservative Christian nation, where English is the primary language, and where they have adopted a flag and a constitution much similar to our own. The nation is approximately 85% Christian, 11% Muslim, and a sprinkling of 'other.' It is also a very poor country, heavily supported by subsidies from other nations. The average wages run from \$ 100 to \$ 200 per month, and most people live without the comforts that we Americans enjoy (like running water, electricity, cars, etc.) It's a country that has survived many difficulties. Civil War. Ebola. Corruption.

Well, it was a pleasure getting to know my new brother, Moses. I had not expected to meet Moses during my lifetime, perhaps in the afterlife, but . . . I met Moses Somah of Liberia! It was a blessing to host him in our home. He was very gracious and tried most of our 'weird food', including bacon, three bean salad, blueberry muffins, and chocolate cake. (Their diet is mostly rice.)

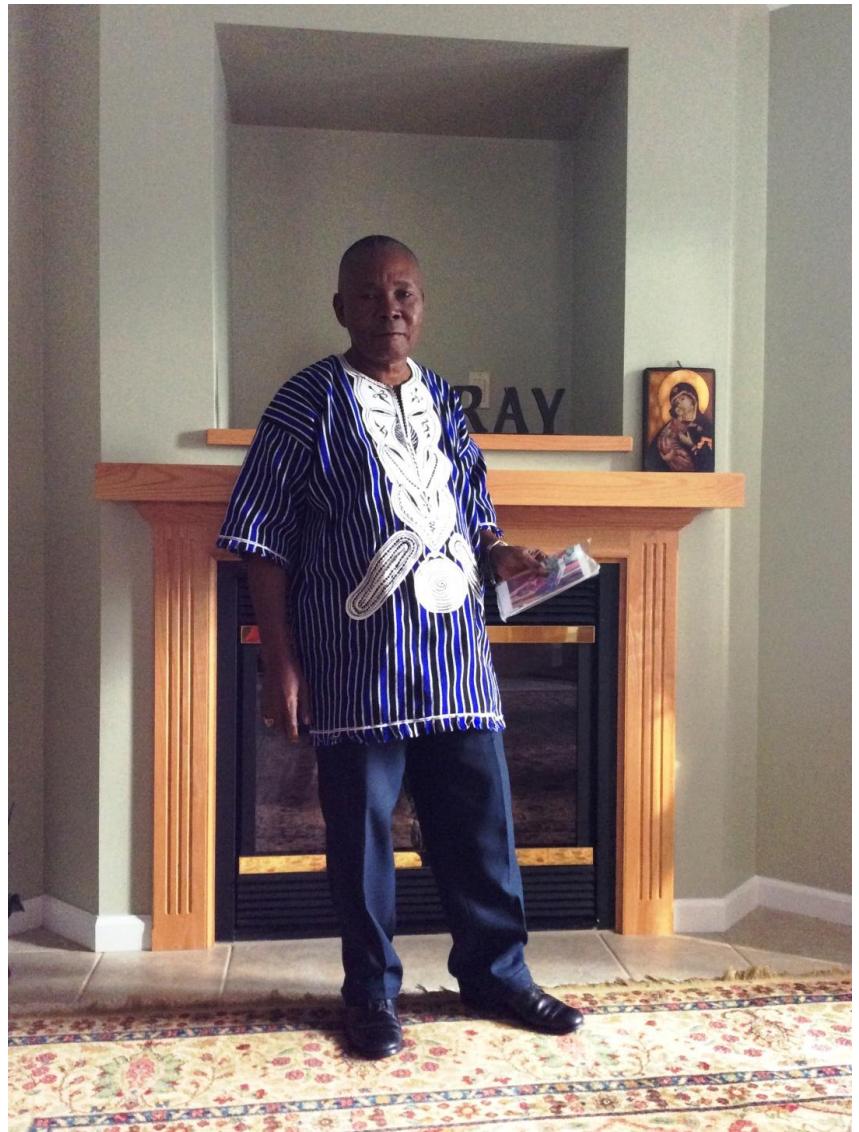
The UB story in Liberia is fascinating. Best I can piece together, the new church group that Moses was a part of some years back (maybe 30 years back) were looking for a name for their church. Moses and a group of other church members found a list of denominations, about 160 of them, and looked over and prayed over that list. Their eyes and spirits were drawn to the one called 'UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST.' (I like that one too!) Just in that name, think about this, there is the implication that we are UNITED. That we are together. That we love one another. There is the idea that we are BROTHERS. That we are family. And the idea that we are 'IN CHRIST.' That we are Christian. Part of the Body. So, they decided to become that day, long ago, United Brethren in Christ.

Only one thing: nobody told us! We didn't find out about the Liberian Church of the United Brethren in Christ until a few short years ago. Well, we found each other, and have established them as the Liberian Conference, and have installed Reverend Moses S. K. Somah as resident bishop.

Meeting with him over the days of his habitation with us reminded me of how very blessed (spoiled) we are as Christians in America. Moses has so little to work with. He gave me a report about his family of churches in Liberia, and what they need to be faithful and fruitful in continuing to lead souls to Christ in that impoverished nation. He did not have a computer. Thankfully, our church (Missions Ministry) turned on a dime, and we were able to purchase him an affordable Dell Laptop Computer and case to take home with him to Liberia. He does not have wheels, no vehicle capable of getting him through the unpaved jungle roads to visit the congregations he's overseeing. Imagine how I felt, knowing we had several cars cluttering up our driveway, and more in the house for cars (the garage). I wonder if Mose's home is as nice as our garage! His pastors need training. I am feeling somewhat unable and unworthy, but am praying about whether I can provide some training for the team of nine pastors that Moses oversees. There is much Moses does not have, but there is much he does have: A large and loving family. Grandchildren. Great faith, hope, and love!

Moses headed for home on Tuesday morning. Harrisburg - Washington - Belgium - Liberia, something like 24 hours or more of travel. He has already called me on the telephone. We have a new brother in Christ. I hope our church family will be able to be a blessing and a support to him; he was touched and impressed with the love and the hospitality he experienced here!

Please pray for Moses. If you would want to support his ministry as a church leader, let me know. Thanks!



OUR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY: UNITY

Years ago, when I worked for the Eastman Kodak Company as an engineer, later as a supervisor, manager, and director, annually we had a performance review. Criticizing employees was generally frowned upon, rather, we were to inspire them positively and constructively. ☺ So, opportunities to improve were euphemistically called 'Development Opportunities.' Not that we were bad, or underperforming, just that we could develop our capabilities further!



So, given the backdrop of our recent UB Conference in Lancaster, and the three major thrusts of Gospel, Unity, and Missions, what is our 'development opportunity' as a church?

Well, we would all have our opinions. My opinion is that it would most closely align with the goal to have great UNITY. Unity is very difficult in a nation, and culture where we are encouraged to be so independent; kind of an 'every man for himself' mentality; a 'don't fence me in' mindset.

Unity. Coming together. Being together. Being of one mind, and spirit. Enjoying Christ, together. Enjoying each other. Leaping at opportunities to serve together, rather than 'I think I'll just do my own thing.'

Why do I think this is a goal for us? Well, it's this. We have as a church many opportunities to be together, and to do things together, and to advance God's work together. But it seems there are so few takers. So few 'volunteers.' It actually takes a great deal of 'arm twisting' to get our folks out of the easy chair and into the front lines where Christ is working.

I wish it weren't so, but it is so. Staffing up for handing out H2O bottles at our community festival. Staffing up for VBS. Getting enough folks to be able to offer nursery to young families on Sunday mornings. Having enough teachers and students to learn about the Lord at mid-week services is a challenge. Getting people out a few times a year to clean up and care for the great campus God has given us can be a challenge.

Why is this? I believe it's because we have all fallen victim to the loud siren-song of the American culture. Be an individual. Be independent. Don't let others tell you what to do! Take care of yourself! Take care of your own!

This stands in strong opposition to the culture of Christ, and the teachings of God's Word: Surrender yourself. Make sacrifices. Defer your rewards until heaven. Serve Jesus. Practice the 'one anothers' of the Bible. Love one another. Serve one another. Teach one another. Greet one another. Be hospitable to one another.

As members of the United Brethren in Christ, and as followers of Christ we have a choice to make. Do we believe more in the whole (Unity), or in the individual (me, myself and I.) It's awfully easy to choose self; that's what everyone else is doing. But biblically, and historically, as United Brethren, and as Christians, we lift our eyes above ourselves, and come together, with eager anticipation, to serve Him. We abandon our self-centered motives, and seek together the Lord's motives for us as a body - the Body of Christ at Salem.

We, as the leaders and staff at Salem, will be thinking and talking and acting upon our need to be together - to actually model our namesake: United Brethren in Christ. May we be a church that is truly - together - one mind, one heart, one spirit.

SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for . . .

✝ Ministry Needs:

- VBS Starts Sunday, July 23rd
- Youth: Summer Mission Trip Allentown
- Potential Salem relocation to North Pointe
- Developing Stephen Ministry: Sandy Ibaugh
- Funk Family, ministry in Lincoln, Nebraska

✝ Hospital, or recovery

- Tracy Sellers, minor surgery 7/25
- Pauline Clouser, heal from pneumonia
- Doris Guyer, heart failure, weakness

- Payton Bowling, recovery, brain tumor
- Lisa Sattazahn, Knee Surgery, 8/2

✝ Grieving Families:

- Amon, sudden loss of nephew Kevin

✝ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment

- Julianna Shubert, ongoing disorder
- Bob Paxton - compression fracture spine
- Brandon Kissinger, Chiari Malformation
- Ray Bricker, Parkinsons

LAST WORD: PRECIOUS

This word just popped into my head as I was thinking . . . 'last word? What last word? What's it to be this week?' Precious. What we have is precious, as United Brethren.

In support of Pastor Lascase ordination, several families came who have been part of other denominations. According to our ancient standards (1815 Confession of Faith, family and marriage standards defined in our Discipline) we would probably barely recognize these other denominations as truly Christian today. And those who shared with me and saw the gospel focus, the love, the unity, the mission of the United Brethren in Christ were touched. Positively by our movement - by our faithfulness. And saddened about what is happening in their own.

Many churches have become so divided and fractured by the ongoing decrease of holiness, and the embrace of worldly social values. It reminds one of the weather forecast in scripture:

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (2 Timothy 4:3)

Friends, that time is most definitely now. One of the speakers shared during a class on Friday morning that he had visited a church which had no pulpit bibles. When he asked the church members about this, they commented 'Oh, we are way past that now!' (No longer need God's Word; they have the word of Man!)

What we have in our church, and in our 250 year young movement is precious. We are UNITED. BRETHREN. IN CHRIST. May it remain so until the Lord calls us home. Blessings to all . . .

Pastor Art



**United
Brethren**
ALL FOR CHRIST